

**Montague Finance Committee
Final Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 27, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.**

This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/639957060>

PRESENT: Jen Audley, Chair; Greg Garrison, Vice-Chair; Fred Bowman, John Hanold, Chris Menegoni, Jennifer Waryas and Francina Wisnewski, members.

OTHERS PRESENT: Wendy Bogusz, Executive Assistant to BOS (left at 6:05 p.m.)

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair, Jen Audley. She announced that the meeting is being recorded by MCTV as well as by Wendy Bogusz.
2. **Approval of the minutes from Finance Committee meetings: 09/29/21 and 10/06/21.** All members have received and reviewed the minutes. **On a motion by JH and seconded by GG, the minutes were approved as presented. FB, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; CM, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye and JA, aye.**
3. **Discuss October 13, 2021 Special Town Meeting:** The FinCom debriefed on the Special Town Meeting.
 - JW questioned the set-up of the meeting and how it affects the moderator's ability to introduce folks. She also mentioned about the timing of receiving the information prior to the meeting and enough time given to present the information thoroughly.
 - FB will speak to the moderator about the set-up over such a large area. Also, the FinCom needs to be very careful how money is being spent over the next few years.
 - Wendy Bogusz made mention that all documents for the Special Town Meeting were distributed by September 28 which is a very big accomplishment for the Town Hall.
 - FW suggested that the moderator recognize the Chair of the Finance Committee and then the Chair can introduce the members attending.
 - JH suggested that instead of the main table set-up in a straight line, have it in a semi-circle which would make it easier to see the members. He thought overall it was an effective meeting and that people attending had many chances to speak.
 - CM thought it went well and that the cannabis impact needs to be built on to be successful. It was expected to have the large discussion on cannabis due to the lateness of receiving the articles.
 - JA adds that she came away from the meeting feeling that having a Reserves policy that is more clear will be helpful in the future; for example where the funds for cannabis sales will be spent. She also feels that being more clear on policies for when there is a lot more Free Cash than projected; where the revenue exceeds the projections, what is going to be done with the surplus. Lastly, the FinCom needs to be more clear about the options for using windfall monies such as the ARPA funding that has been tentatively earmarked for the pedestrian bridge. She also noted that there is still the feeling among the residents that the town is broke when actually the town is doing quite well. Reserves have been replenished and plans are in place to spend money received from the State.

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· GG echoed that funds available to the Town need to be communicated clearly on how they are being used.

4. Discuss next steps for financial policies

There are 3 remaining policies which need to be reviewed and presented to the Selectboard; A-1 Annual Budget Process, A-2 Capital Planning and A-5 Reserves. The 15 that have been vetted and brought before the Selectboard are on the agenda for their November 1, 2021 meeting. Since the FinCom has completed their process, there is no need for a joint meeting. The first policy of those still to be tackled will be Reserves where the committee will have more of a formal discussion this Fall. The second policy, Annual Budget Process, will be discussed in conjunction with the FY23 budget development cycle, which is already going to deviate from expected timelines somewhat due to the timing of setting the tax rate in to December rather than October/November. Also, on November 15, Steve Ellis will be presenting a proposal for changing the staffing in the Selectboard's Office. This proposal will be initially reviewed by the Personnel Committee (Selectboard) and that's a new step we may want to formalize as part of the budget process. The ATFC Finance Committee Handbook has an updated section on the Annual Budget Process. The FinCom is asked to skim through that section for upcoming discussion. The third policy, Capital Planning, the FinCom decided to have the Capital Improvements Committee take the lead and bring recommendations to the FinCom for future discussion. The CIC and the FinCom will meet jointly on November 17.

5. Association of Town Finance Committee 2021 Annual Meeting webinar series and new edition of ATFC Finance Committee Handbook.

The Committee discussed this annual event and its registration process. JH asked the members to look through the Table of Contents in the next month or so just to familiarize themselves to its contents and possibly pick a topic for future discussion. JH spoke about the first session that was on ARPA money and its availability to the Town which is actually dispersed through the Selectboard's authority. Since the Town has received considerable ARPA funds, a discussion is needed with the Capital Improvements Committee on how these funds are to be handled. JH also attended the first session. He found the presenter to be in need of more structure in his presentation of information. JA found the information available through the "chat" section of the presentation to be very useful.

6. Discuss schedule and topics for upcoming meetings

Upcoming meetings will be held on November 10 and 17 as well as December 8 and 15. For the November 10th meeting, the plan is to discuss the Reserve Policy. November 17 will be Capital Planning. In December, the committee will begin discussing the Annual Budget Process policy. JA will send links to reading materials for the November 10th meeting.

7. Topics not anticipated

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JA stated there is an interest in having a discussion on educational funding and would like to receive a budget calendar from each of the school districts so that the FinCom can be more engaged in the process. JW asked members to relate to her their questions she could ask at the next school committee meeting as she is on the school committee. Fred Bowman expressed interest in hearing an update on the Six-Town Regionalization Planning Committee's work and in learning more about the prospect of building a new elementary school to replace the current Hillcrest facilities which was raised at a recent CIC meeting. The committee can also reach out to Rich Kuklewicz who is on the Franklin County Tech School Committee.

The members were also asked by the Chair about the format of the meetings and if they have strong feelings one way or the other about the continuation of meeting remotely? Although there are disadvantages in not seeing the members in person, each member who spoke feels they would like to continue with the remote Zoom meetings at this time and revisit this topic again in the Spring.

On a motion by JH and seconded by GG, the Finance Committee adjourned at 7:25 p.m. FB, aye; JW, aye; FW, aye; CM, aye; GG, aye; JH, aye; and JA, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

BettyLou Mallet
Scribe

Approved by Finance Committee: 11/10/2021